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Currents in the News

Soviet View: They're Beating Boycott

MOSCOW

Even as President Carter's crusade for a boycott of this summer's Olympic Games in Moscow won growing support from other nations, Soviet officials were claiming victory in the struggle for global backing.

The Kremlin's view: The games will go on as scheduled, and it's the U.S.—not Russia—that will wind up with an international black eye.

Soviet officials acknowledged that a massive boycott would hurt Russia's image in other countries and cause nationwide humiliation at home. A Western diplomat even speculated that failure of the games could "lead to a searching re-examination inside the Politburo of all Soviet policies."

But Russian spokesmen predicted that the reverse will happen—that most countries will participate in the Moscow event and Russia will be portrayed as the dominant superpower while the U.S. is seen as in decline.

While Washington has lobbied mostly with other governments, the Russians have relied on contacts with national Olympic committees. Result: The White House claims that at least 35 of the 142 eligible nations will shun the games, and that another dozen or more are leaning against participation.



Work continues at Moscow's Olympic stadium.

But Moscow insists that 106 Olympic committees have given assurances that their teams will be on hand.

And while Carter argued that Russia must be punished for invading a neighbor, Moscow contended that the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan is not an issue at all. *Pravda* insisted in mid-April that it is the U.S. that is waging "full-sized, though undeclared, war against Afghanistan, using bandit formations operating from Pakistan."

From that position, voiced at home and abroad, the Soviets argue that Carter's call for a boycott is only a smoke screen to hide his aggressive plans in South Asia and a device to enhance his

chances of being re-elected President.

The U.S. Olympic Committee's April 12 vote to boycott the summer games, Moscow claimed, resulted from Carter's "crude blackmail" and violated the Olympic concept of not mixing politics and sports.

On the other hand, the Russians saw nothing wrong with the political emphasis they always have placed on the Olympics. The Soviet Communist Party, in a booklet still distributed to party activists, said that giving the games to Moscow was "convincing evidence of the correctness of the foreign-policy course of our party."

Although insisting its own views are superior, the Kremlin continued to worry about contacts Russians may have this summer with foreigners. A Moscow newspaper charged that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency is training Russian-speaking Harvard graduates for "hostile, undermining activities" in Moscow this summer.

Customs officials said inspectors will watch closely for Zionist, religious and anti-Soviet propaganda in the baggage of Olympic tourists.

Dissenting views aren't the Russians' only worry. Reports circulated of Soviet children being warned not to accept candy or gum from foreigners. They were told it might contain poison. □